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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 12, 1973

The Honorable Stuart Symington
Acting Chairman
Armed Services Committee
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Stu:

As the Watergate crisis has unfolded, it has become clear that the intelligence community has been involved in domestic activities, either by way of consultation or active cooperation, to a far greater extent than initially realized.

To my mind the most important aspect of this tragedy is the potential for exploitation that now exists between any President and the intelligence community. Where once there were assurances that the CIA would remain aloof from domestic activities, now there are doubts and suspicions. Once there was no question that foreign intelligence operations would remain distinct and clear from internal matters. But no more.

A close reading of the National Security Act of 1947 reveals more omissions than stated authority with respect to CIA activities.

First, the CIA is not given any direct authority to engage in covert operations overseas and yet obviously this does happen.

Second, the CIA is specifically prohibited from engaging in any domestic police, law enforcement or internal security functions but memoranda from the Watergate case indicate that, at a minimum, the CIA passively participated in such activities.

Third, there are several loopholes in the Act that might allow an interpretation of much greater authority than expressly provided.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the CIA's charter is not totally contained in the National Security Act. In fact, since that time, a series of National Security Council Intelligence Directives, from the National Security Council to the intelligence community, have significantly broadened and detailed the responsibilities of the CIA. These interpretations of the 1947 Act are classified. Thus we have the curious situation of classified extensions and interpretations of a Congressional Act.

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It is my belief that these National Security Council Intelligence Directives must now be made public if we are to retain confidence in the intelligence community. At present there is no public information as to what authority has been given to the CIA or other intelligence components by the National Security Council. We know what Congress has approved but not how the National Security Council has interpreted this legislation.

I do not ask that specific operations or other sensitive matters be disclosed. That would be imprudent.

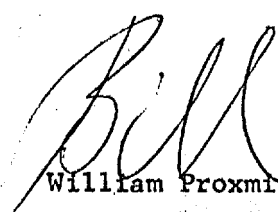
But it is necessary, it seems, to review exactly what responsibilities have been delegated to the CIA through the NSCIDs or other mechanisms.

Therefore, I am writing to inquire if the Oversight Subcommittee could obtain copies of the Directives and review them for public release?

The CIA is one of the most important agencies serving our government. But it must be controlled in such a manner that no possibility exists for misuse or exploitation. Safeguards are needed. The release of the NSCIDs would be a good first step.

I am enclosing two recent speeches that provide additional details and I would be pleased to talk personally with you about this matter.

Sincerely,



William Proxmire, U.S.S.

WP:rtm